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TERRA-COTTA BUST OF THE VIRGIN

SILVESTRO DELL'AQUILA (?)

Gift of Mrs. John T. Pratt

## A Renaissance Bust of Painted Terra Cotta<sup>1</sup>

Through the generosity of Mrs. John T. Pratt, the Farnsworth Museum has received a painted terra-cotta bust of the Virgin (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> It is our good fortune that this bust, the first example of Italian Renaissance sculpture to enter the collection, should be of uncommon interest and quality. A provincial work, it none the less possesses the homely grace, united with sure design and sensitive craftsmanship, which constitutes the charm of so many of the minor but representative works of that fertile age. In drapery and feature it follows a type which seems to have originated in the Abruzzi near the end of the fifteenth century and to have retained its popularity there through the larger part of the following century.

The bust, which is life size, is cut off just above the waist, and measures 18½ inches in height, and 22⅛ inches in width at the base. The head bends forward, the gaze is down. The features, all of them prominent, receive added emphasis from the abrupt change of plane in the cheeks. The neck is long, but broad, and firmly implanted in the massive shoulders. The Virgin wears a heavy gold mantle incised with stars and lined with blue, which fits snugly over the head and frames the face with two great conical folds that curve down from the top of the head like inverted horns of plenty. This garment is fastened on the breast by a strap ornamented with a jewelled brooch.<sup>3</sup> A thin veil, painted a delicate bluish grey, drops low over the forehead and falls in crushed folds beneath the mantle, its pointed ends resting on the tightly fitting dress of muted red. Above the neckline is a guimpe of the same color and texture as the veil.

In spite of chipping and repainting, the bust is in good condition. Vestiges of primary paint visible beneath the scaling pigment indicate that the original color scheme has been preserved. Along the lower edge, the terra cotta is broken in many places, and here and there patches of gesso and color are missing. Holes have been made in the sides, probably to fasten adornments offered by the faithful.<sup>4</sup> The head has undoubtedly undergone some reconditioning, although the extent will be impossible to determine until the paint is removed. There seems to be a small repair in the upper lip in the center and a little to the right. The front surface of the chin is noticeably rubbed. Over the eyebrows, which themselves may have been lowered at their outer extremities, the edge of the veil appears

<sup>1</sup> The following, with minor changes, forms part of an article entitled "Notes on the Art of Silvestro dell'Aquila" published in the *Art Bulletin*, vol. XXIV, 1942, pp. 232-43, which includes a study of the major works of Silvestro dell'Aquila.

<sup>2</sup> It passed into the Pratt Collection in 1917. Previously, it had belonged to Baron Henri de St. Levée d'Aguerre, who had purchased it in Naples.

<sup>3</sup> The four knobs are now covered with gold leaf. Originally they may have been painted to represent pearls.

<sup>4</sup> From the position of the holes on the bust, it would seem that they were fitted for use in the support of necklaces, as may be seen at Loreto (A. Colasanti, *Loreto*, Bergamo, 1910, pp. 119-20). Cf. also the Madonna del Colle in the Collegiata, Pescocostanzo (E. Agostinoni, *Altipiani d'Abruzzo*, Bergamo, 1912, p. 106). Angels supporting crowns, and metal *glories* were not uncommon additions to the statues of the Virgin in the Abruzzi, but they were usually fastened to the background.

to have been patched in spots and smoothed down in others, and the curve strengthened by the delicate use of a rasp.

Of the three openings in the back of the bust the two small ones located in the head and neck were fitted with terra-cotta disks and concealed from view beneath the gesso and paint. The lower disk is now missing, and the hole has been closed with canvas.<sup>5</sup> Around the large opening in the shoulders is an area of exposed terra cotta, which, judging by the fibres imbedded in the gesso which edges it, was at one time covered with cloth.

The distinctive feature of the bust is the headdress with its cornucopia-like folds. This conventionalization of the ripples which usually soften the edge of the mantle

about the face of the Virgin allies it with a group of seated Madonnas most of which are found in or near Aquila degli Abruzzi. Of these, perhaps the best, and the one bearing the earliest date, is the terra-cotta statue made during the last decade of the Quattrocento by Silvestro dell'Aquila (Fig. 3 and 4).<sup>6</sup> Whether he is the first to give plastic treat-



Fig. 1. WELLESLEY COLLEGE, FARNSWORTH MUSEUM

<sup>5</sup> Both holes may have served as openings for cross bars joining the inner and outer vertical rods of an armature. The lower one ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter) alone may have been used for this purpose, or perhaps for a brace needed in setting up the completed work, while the upper one ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter) may have been used simply for hollowing out the head. Since the latter hole is on the back of the head, not on the top, it could not have been made to accommodate the end of the vertical rod of an armature as Wilm (*Gotische Tonplastik in Deutschland*, Augsburg, 1929, pp. 20-21), suggests in the case of certain small German terra cottas.

<sup>6</sup> Payments for Silvestro's statue were made in 1494, 1499, 1500 (Leosini, *Monumenti storici artistici della città di Aquila*, Aquila, 1848, p. 201. This notice was published in part by G. De Nicola, "Silvestro dell'Aquila" *L'arte*, XI, 1908, 11). The quality of the other statues in this group differs materially, since a number represent crude peasant work of the region. Among the better examples, besides the Madonna of S. Bernardino by Silvestro dell'Aquila, are: the terra-cotta Madonna in S. M. di Collemaggio, Aquila (Fig. 7); the wooden one from S. M. Mater Domini in Chieti (Fig. 5); the terra-cotta Madonna from S. M. della Tomba, Sulmona (P. Piccirilli, "Notizie di Abruzzi-Molise", *L'arte*, XII, 1909, 71); the terra-cotta Madonna in S. M. del Ponte, Fontecchio (P. Piccirilli, "Su e giù per l'Abruzzi: S. M. del Ponte", *Pagine d'arte*, IV, 1916, 26).



Fig. 2. WELLESLEY COLLEGE, FARNSWORTH MUSEUM

ment to this detail which so caught the fancy of the Abruzzesi it is impossible to say, but his prestige and the presence of the statue in the most ostentatious church of the region, newly constructed to honor and to shelter the remains of the popular St. Bernardine of Siena,<sup>7</sup> would make this a reasonable conjecture.

In a brief essay written in 1915<sup>8</sup> the Wellesley bust (Fig. 2) was attributed to Silvestro on the basis of the S. Bernardino Madonna (Fig. 3 and 4), but no hint was given that it might be a fragment of a similar statue. Yet everything about the bust, the inclination of the head, the downward gaze, the position of the shoulders, and the fall of the mantle over them indicate an action that is completed outside the existing parts. The abnormal extension of the shoulders in the back, functionless in a bust, would

<sup>7</sup> St. Bernardine of Siena was canonized in 1450, six years after his death in Aquila. In 1472 the relics were translated to the church begun in 1454. The consecration of the church did not take place until 1571. Cf. N. F. Faraglia, "La Chiesa Primitiva e il Monastero di S. Bernardino nell'Aquila", *Rassegna pugliese*, XXVII, 1912, 20, 338, 340.

<sup>8</sup> Germain Bapst, *Buste de Vierge en terre cuite polychromée de Sylvestro d'Aquila*, Paris, 1915.





Fig. 3. AQUILA, S. BERNARDINO (Detail of Fig. 4)

serve a real purpose in balancing the weight of projecting knees in a full-length figure. The tender smile playing about the lips and the glint of humor in the eyes must have a cause. Furthermore, on the underside of the rim may be seen the curved ridges made by the string or wire used to cut through the wet clay dividing large figures into sections for convenience in firing and transportation.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the bust was originally part of a larger figure dislocated and partially destroyed, perhaps by one of the numerous earthquakes with which the Abruzzi has been cursed.

<sup>9</sup> The Madonna in the church of S. M. della Tomba at Sulmona is in four pieces (Piccirilli, *L'arte*, XII, 1909, 22), the one by Gagliardelli now in the Museo Civico at Ripatransone is in several (C. Grigioni, "Due opere di Giovan Francesco Gagliardelli", *Rassegna bibliographia dell'arte italiana*, VIII, 1905, 181-85; *idem.*, "L'arte di Giovan Francesco Gagliardelli", *Arte e storia*, XXIX, 1910, 1-2). The terra-cotta Madonna with the Book, in Berlin, was fired in two pieces (*Bildwerke des Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1933, I, 110). The numerous jarrings which these statues have received frequently reveal the divisions: Fig. 4; *Arte e storia*, XXIX, 1910, fig. on p. 2; *Inventario, Provincia di Aquila*, Rome, 1934, fig. on p. 146; *Rassegna marchigiana*, IV, 1926, fig. on p. 508.



Fig. 4. AQUILA, S. BERNARDINO

In the majority of the statues referred to above, the Madonna is represented seated, her hands joined in worship above the Christ Child resting on her knees in a reclining, or a playful half-sitting position (Fig. 4 and 7). At a time when humanistic thought was creating many changes in the traditional iconography, this variant<sup>10</sup> of the Virgin who adores her Child but never caresses or fondles him seems to have been a popular substitute for

<sup>10</sup> The type is rare at Florence although not unknown; cf. Ruth Wedgewood Kennedy, *Alesso Baldovinetti*, New Haven, 1938, p. 56. It is common in the painting of Murano, Umbria, the Marches and other parts of central Italy.

the earlier hieratic type in those regions where provincialism or a distinguished mediaeval tradition made the taste conservative. Countless Madonnas are witness to the popularity of this variant throughout the Abruzzi. It would be natural to assume that our figure followed the same pattern.

To diminish the monotony of repetition in these figures, the sculptors altered the manner in which the arms were held. Three positions, subject to minor changes, may be distinguished. These are best illustrated by the Madonnas of S. Bernardino (Fig. 4),<sup>11</sup> of S. Maria Mater Domini, Chieti, (Fig. 5)<sup>12</sup> and of S. Maria delle Grazie, Teramo.<sup>13</sup> In the Wellesley bust the slope of the Virgin's left shoulder, together with the two large folds starting low and crossing its contour line below the armpits, indicates that the upper arm remains close to the body, while the forearm is thrust forward or up. This would associate it with the Chieti type (Fig. 5). Disconcerting



Fig. 5. CHIETI, S. MARIA MATER DOMINI

then is the generous curve of the opposite shoulder, which implies a large circling movement of the whole of her right arm. To ignore this implication and to regard the change in shape of the two shoulders merely as the result of a natural desire for variety is possible, but not entirely

<sup>11</sup> The elbows extend out from the body but the forearms are held close to the waist. The joined hands, which slant upward, start at right angles to the wrists. Usually only the wrists and hands show from underneath the drapery.

<sup>12</sup> The upper arms are held close to the sides as far as the elbow. The whole of the forearm slants up, much of it is free of drapery. The joined hands are held rather high.

<sup>13</sup> Almost the whole arm is held free from the body and exposed for the greater part of its length. The joined hands are held high (Balzano, "Scultori e sculture abruzzesi", *L'arte*, XII, 1909, 185, fig. 2).





Fig. 6. AQUILA, MUSEO CIVICO

satisfactory, since our artist shows himself ready enough to exploit symmetry in the design of the head.<sup>14</sup> It may be necessary to seek the explanation in a small stone Madonna now in the collection of the Museo Civico at Aquila (Fig. 6). This statue has in common with the bust the composition of the shoulders and the disposition of the drapery over them.<sup>15</sup> These are here explained by the action of the arms: the Virgin's right arm curves in support of the Child seated upon her lap, the lower left arm extends forward, the fingers resting on the edge of a book supported upon her knee. Logically such action would entail the abrupt divorce and sideward pull of the mantle<sup>16</sup> from the body below the strap which is to be seen in the bust, but

<sup>14</sup> Variety seems to be the intention of the artist in the Madonna at Chieti, where a subtle asymmetry appears throughout the figure. Weight may be lent to such an interpretation in the case of the Wellesley bust by the Madonna from the church of Farno di Acquasanta, published by L. Serra ("Un'opera di Silvestro dell'Aquila nella Chiesa di Farno di Acquasanta", *Rassegna marchigiana*, IV, 1926, 508), although it is difficult to tell from the illustration how much the movement differs in the two shoulders.

<sup>15</sup> The slanting folds of the mantle, caused by the movement of the Virgin's left arm, remain within the contour line on the stone Madonna (Fig. 6, cf. Fig. 2). The arrangement found on the bust is much more natural but it was probably misunderstood by the stonecutter.

<sup>16</sup> That the sideward pull of the mantle may indicate a Madonna della Misericordia hardly seems possible, since the bust is so obviously allied with a large number of statues made in the same province and representing the Madonna and Child only. Popular as the subject was in Italy, in both painting and relief, the Madonna della Misericordia is rare in the round. Vera Sussmann ("Maria mit dem Schutzmantel" *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, V, 1929, 348), whose lists are slightly longer than Perdrizet's (*La Vierge de Miséricorde*, Paris, 1908), gives but the one example, the statuette over the door of the vestibule of S. M. Novella in Rome. Two small wooden groups are found at Urbino and Varignano, cf. *Bollettino d'arte*, VIII, 1928-29, 496-97. De Nino ("La scultura figulina nell'Abruzzo", *Rivista abruzzese*, XIV, 1899, 61) speaks of a terra-cotta statue representing the Madonna della Mercede in Sant'Eufemia a Mailla, and goes on to describe the Madonna as seated with the hands joined in prayer, but he does not mention any subordinate figures.



Fig. 7. AQUILA, S. MARIA DI COLLEMAGGIO

which has been partially ignored by the clumsy stonecutter. Although the statue appears more hieratic in conception than the bust, largely because the head is held stiffly erect, this too must be attributed to want of dexterity in carving rather than to intent, for the eyes are cast down. Other details which connect the two works are the prominent clavicle, the dimple in the chin, the crease in the upper eyelid and the absence of the usual sideward droop of the head. Differences, though minor, exist; and considering the fragmentary state of the Wellesley terra cotta it would be rash to press the resemblance and say that it was the prototype of the stone statue. But it happens that, aside from the similarities mentioned and the more important composition of the arms, all the distinguishing features of this statue — the broad-based triangular composition of the whole, the long complex fold swinging up from the right ankle to the left knee, breaking the usual M formation between the legs, the trumpet folds cascading down the front of the left leg, the knotted girdle, the cherub brooch, as well as the headdress — may be found in the two Madonnas in Aquila, the one in S. Bernardino (Fig. 4), the other in S. Maria di Collemaggio (Fig. 7), with which the

Wellesley bust has the closest stylistic affinities. Since the similarity in style would have made the statue of which the bust is a fragment equally attractive to the provincial stonecutter — and there is no proof that it was not equally accessible — it may be justifiable to conjecture that it served as one of several sources for the stone Madonna. This would not have been exceptional, for three models were recommended to Giovan Francesco Gagliardelli da Sant'Angelo in 1524 when he made the Madonna for the convent of S. M. Magna at Ripatransone; and Saturnino dei Gatti, friend and younger contemporary of Silvestro, was asked to combine the merits of two existing works in his statue for Navelli.<sup>17</sup> The book in the hand of the Virgin is not common, but it is found occasionally on terra-cotta Madonnas<sup>18</sup> and it had a certain popularity in the last half of the Quattrocento among Tuscan and Umbrian painters.<sup>19</sup>

These terra-cotta and wooden Madonnas were designed to grace niches either in the walls of chapels or in tabernacles<sup>20</sup> with carved or painted wings. That the Wellesley bust was so designed is evident from the open back and the unsightly bulge in the rear of the head and shoulders which only a niche could conceal.

The stylistic relation of the bust (Fig. 2) to the Madonnas in S. Bernardino and S. Maria di Collemaggio is patent. Similarity of feature to the first (Fig. 3) is marked. In both heads the round, firm eyeballs press against lowered lids. A sickle-like curve outlines the opening through which the Virgin gazes at her Child. The nose, well-rooted in the face,

<sup>17</sup> Cf. note 24. The contract with Gagliardelli was published by C. Grigioni, *Rass. bibl. dell'arte it.*, VIII, 1905, 182-83.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. the Madonna in S. Giustina, Padua, attributed to Minelli. (Planiscig, *Venezianische Bildhauer der Renaissance*, Vienna, 1921, p. 164, fig. 175); Rizzo and others. In this statue the Virgin's right arm extends forward from the elbow; the fingers are spread out on an open book which rests on her knee. The same position of the right arm and hand is found on the Enthroned Madonna with Two Angels, in Berlin. The appearance of this statue, judging by the illustrations (*Bildwerke des Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1933, I, 109) is rather disquieting. Schottmüller associates the statue with the art of Bologna. She ascribes to a Master of the Marches the Madonna with a Book (*ibid.*, p. 110).

<sup>19</sup> The influence of central Italian painting on the art of the Abruzzi, even on the sculpture of Silvestro, was persistent. The painters depicted the book both open as in the terra cottas mentioned in note 18, and closed. Cf. the Madonna in the National Gallery, London, and the one in the Fogg Museum, Cambridge, attributed to Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (R. van Marle, *Development of the Italian Schools*, The Hague, 1933, XIV, 180, 181) and the Virgin and Child in the Chiesa della Cona, Cave (van Marle, *op. cit.*, 1934, XV, 585).

<sup>20</sup> Most of the tabernacles have disappeared, but an early 15th century one with painted wings still exists in the parochial church of S. M. Assunta at Fossa (*Inventario, Aquila*, fig. on p. 148), and a late 16th century one with carved panels exists in the parochial church of S. Felice Martire, Poggio Picenze (*ibid.*, fig. on p. 177). A wooden tabernacle is specified in Gagliardelli's contract for the Madonna of Ripatransone. Niches were frequently faced with marble altarpieces some of which were later additions, e.g. the Altar of the Sacrament by Sebastiano da Como made in 1532 for S. M. de' Lumi, Campli, (I. C. Gavini, *Storia dell'architettura in Abruzzi*, Rome, 1927-28, II, 240, fig. 898). The Madonna in the niche bearing the date 1495, the exactness of which is suspect, the restoration date being 1595, was attributed to Blasuccio by Balzano. It belongs to the type and general style of the Madonna of S. Bernardino, but it has little community of style with the Madonna at Civitella del Tronto the basis for Balzano's attribution (*L'arte*, XII, 1909, 186-87).



narrows to a slender ridge along its upper surface and ends in a delicate tip and finely modelled wings. The sensitive curve of the lips disappears into the same round recess producing its soft tassel of shadow. The furrow beneath the lower lip is deep and prepares for the protruding chin which in the bust is graced by a dimple. But in the S. Bernardino Madonna, Silvestro had a care for the discipline of relief, the jaw line flattens out to meet the veil, which with its overlapping folds fills the space between cheek and mantle. Everything is kept shallow. In the Wellesley bust the planes of the face turn sharply, the edge of the veil vanishes in the deep pockets of shadow. The folds of the mantle swell into large space-enclosing cones, whose volume is as distinctly felt as that of the smooth egg-shaped head. The solid mass of the shoulders is not lost within the mantle.<sup>21</sup> Edges are thicker. Symmetry is established by omitting the slight inclination of the head to the side, and the composition of head, veil and mantle as worked out in the figure for S. Bernardino is stylized into a more formal pattern. This is evident in the ease with which one describes the head as egg-shaped, the face as heart-shaped, and the headdress as bell-shaped. Yet this symmetry is already implicit in the conventionalization of the headdress. In the bust we have a new study of this formula, one in which pattern, solids, and voids have been exploited. In this respect the Madonna of S. Maria di Collemaggio (Fig. 7) stands between the S. Bernardino statue and the bust at Wellesley. Though it is similar in style and type to both, the shape and mass of the individual parts are given more emphasis than in the statue, e.g., the head and its covering form their own shape unit distinct from that of the shoulders and arms (Figs. 4 and 7). Pattern is not stressed to the degree found in the bust but the design tends in that direction. The thickness of the drapery makes each swell and hollow important. While this statue in the church of Collemaggio has been attributed to Silvestro by two scholars<sup>22</sup> who made detailed studies of his style, it can never be quite free from suspicion because of the notice recorded by Ciurci.<sup>23</sup> It may, as he relates, have been made in 1507, three years after Silvestro's death, though

<sup>21</sup> A pattern of stars occurs on both mantles. The use of the star, appliquéd or incised, as an all-over ornament for the Virgin's garments, was popular throughout the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and is found on many of these statues (*Inventario, Aquila*, figs. on pp. 86, 103, 104). Though often assumed that these decorations are later additions (note the star applied to the halo from which the Child's head has slipped on the statue in S. Bernardino [Fig. 4]) some of them must be restorations, for the motif exists in contemporary painting, cf. Saturnino dei Gatti's Madonna of the Rosary in S. Pietro in Coppito, Aquila (L. Serra, *Aquila*, Bergamo, 1929, p. 103). Possibly its popularity in the region can be traced to the miracle of the star which took place on the piazza of S. M. di Collemaggio in the time of St. Bernardine and which was recalled in a famous sermon by Frat'Angelo di Monte Oliveto in April, 1507 (Leosini, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-30). The mantle of the Madonna of S. Bernardino is blue. A gold mantle such as is seen on the Wellesley bust is not unusual and may be found on the Madonna at Civitella del Tronto and on the one in S. M. del Ponte at Fontecchio.

<sup>22</sup> G. De Nicola, *L'arte*, XI, 1908, 15; A. Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, 1908, VI, 630; Serra (*Aquila*, 1929, pp. 77-80) appears to agree also.

<sup>23</sup> Ciurci's statement is quoted by Leosini, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-30. Cf. also De Nicola, *L'arte*, XI, 1908, 15; Balzano, *L'arte*, XI, 1909, 183; M. Chini, "Pittori aquilani del 400", *Rassegna d'arte degli Abruzzi e del Molise*, II, 1913, 44-46.



it is hard to believe that the hand of the "*famoso artefice forestiero*" was not one trained by Silvestro.<sup>24</sup>

The Wellesley bust may be connected with other monuments. On the Camponeschi tomb, whose traditional attribution to Silvestro has rarely been questioned,<sup>25</sup> can be duplicated the crumpled plaits of the veil in which the long grooves end square or with a fishtail, the bulk of the folds, even the mass of body forms, which is a question of degree rather than kind.

<sup>24</sup> Balzano, (*L'arte*, XII, 1909, 183) ascribed this statue in S. Maria di Collemaggio (Fig. 7) to Giovan Francesco Gagliardelli, who was the author of the Madonna in S. M. Mater Domini, Chieti (Fig. 5), if this Madonna can be identified with the one he made for that city, which was referred to in the contract for his Madonna for Ripatransone (cf. above note 17). The latter figure is distinctly inferior to the one at Chieti, but it possesses many stylistic similarities, such as the long oval face, the slightly sunken cheeks, the high relief of the eyeball along a vertical median line, the sharp contouring of the small protruding lips, the unusual length from waist to hips, and the narrowness of the figure through hips and base. On the other hand the frequently noted similarity of the Madonna in the church of Collemaggio to the Madonna at Chieti is one of type rather than style (note the position of the arms) and affords no real foundation for attribution.

Chini (*Rass. d'arte d. Abruzzi*, II, 1913, 40-46) believes that Ciurci's source referred to a statue destroyed in the earthquake of 1703 and assigns the Collemaggio Madonna to Saturnino dei Gatti di San Vittorino. Chini's basis (cf. also "Documenti relativi ai pittori che operarono in Aquila, fra il 1450 e il 1550 circa," *Bullettino della Regia-Deputazione abruzzese*, VIII, 1927, 91) is a note made by Antinori summarizing a document which referred to a terra-cotta Madonna, now lost, that Saturnino made and painted in Navelli, "*somiglianza della fatta Collemaggio con ornamento come di altra nella Chiesa di San Bernardino*". Because of Antinori's usual accuracy Chini thinks that the original source read: *promisit facere quandam ymaginem ad similitudinem ymaginis facte per ipsum magistrum in ecclesia Santa Marie Collemadii*. Evidence so fragile cannot be accepted without reservation when stylistic data is lacking.

Saturnino dei Gatti di San Vittorino was more frequently employed as a painter than as a sculptor (*Rass. d'arte d. Abruzzi*, I, 1912, 13, 123; II, 1913, 10, 96; *Bull. d. R-Deput. abr.* VIII, 1927, 70 ff., 90; Serra, *Aquila*, 1929, pp. 85, 99; van Marle, *op. cit.*, XV, 217-23). But in 1518 he was asked to make a figure of St. Sebastian like the one by Silvestro formerly in S. M. del Soccorso (*Inventario, Aquila*, fig. on p. 50). He seems to have died before this was carried out and the awkward statue now in S. Benedetto is not by his hand (*ibid.*, fig. on p. 15). Six years earlier, however, he modelled a Madonna and a St. Anthony for S. M. del Ponte in Fontecchio (Leosini, *op. cit.*, p. 60) which probably can be identified with the ones now in the church. Unfortunately, the only illustrations procurable at this time (*Pagine d'arte*, IV, 1916, 26; Gavini, *op. cit.*, II, 295, fig. 902) are too indistinct to furnish evidence for a convincing attribution, either as regards the Madonna of Collemaggio or the Wellesley bust. In respect to the latter the description of the Madonna for Navelli in Antinori's transcription opens up a possibility worth exploring since the bust is so closely connected with both of the statues mentioned in it. It is especially regrettable that the Madonna in S. M. del Ponte cannot be used as a proper check, for even in the poor reproductions it can be seen that it follows the S. Bernardino type, but the curves of the broad shoulders are not disguised by drapery and the head is smoothly covered by the mantle. Saturnino displays in his painting, also, a fondness for tapering faces and sleek heads, (cf. Madonna of the Rosary, Serra, *Aquila*, 1929, p. 103; frescoes in S. Panfilo, Tornimparte, van Marle, *op. cit.*, XV, 218, fig. 134; 219, fig. 135) which are characteristics of the fragment at Wellesley.

<sup>25</sup> Faraglia (*Rassegna pugliese*, XXVII, 1912, 34; *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane*, VIII, 1883, 278) questions the attribution of this tomb in S. Bernardino to Silvestro. It seems very difficult to believe that the artist who modelled the Madonna of S. Bernardino did not at least carve the figure of Maria Pereira (Serra, *Aquila*, 1929, pp. 78, 79)

On the shrine of St. Bernardine, with which Silvestro was occupied at the time of his death, can be seen an increased tendency to turn the planes in depth rather than to flatten them against the background, if one can argue from those figures which suggest his models,<sup>26</sup> for none seem to reveal his chisel. Thus it would appear that if the bust was not made by Silvestro's own hand, it can not have been fashioned far from his shop.

Whether the bust is by Silvestro himself, the leading artist of Aquila from about 1471 until his death in 1504, or by one of his followers, his art has been the determining factor in its creation. As seen in the tombs, shrines and votive figures which have survived, this art is eclectic. Silvestro has helped himself generously to ideas and motifs developed by the Florentine sculptors, particularly by Desiderio and Verrocchio. He has been equally free in adopting the inventions of the Lombards and those of the central Italian painters. Yet in spite of his frequent borrowings he never loses the feeling for monumental effects, for robust forms, ample draperies, quiet poses which are characteristic of the Abruzzi. This is true of the Madonna of S. Bernardino, a work in which Silvestro seems to bring to flower his native art. These characteristics emerge with equal force in the Wellesley bust, which depends upon that statue in all its essential parts.

L. M. B.

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<sup>26</sup> E.g. the Sts. Francis, Bonaventura and Catherine. For the change in the manipulation of the planes compare the modelling of the face and the treatment of the drapery around the ankles of the St. Francis with that of the same saint on the Camponeschi tomb (Serra, *Aquila*, 1929, pp. 80, 86).

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#### ACCESSIONS JANUARY 1938 - JUNE 1940

Painting: Adam and Eve and God by Francesco Furini, 1604-1649. Anonymous gift.

Drawing by Edwin H. Blashfield, 1848-1936. Gift of Mr. Frederic H. Curtiss.

Jadeite head of a God, Toltec. Gift of Mrs. Mabel G. Hunt Doyle.

Portrait on ivory of Myrtille Avery by Artemis Tavshanjian (Mrs. Charles A. Karagheusian). Gift of the artist.

13 Mayan objects: Archaic, Toltec and Aztec. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederic H. Curtiss.

Polychrome terra-cotta bust of the Virgin, by Silvestro dell'Aquila (?), fl. 1471-1504. Gift of Mrs. John T. Pratt.

8 etchings and 22 lithographs by Childe Hassam, 1859-1935. Gift of Mrs. Childe Hassam.



Fig. 8. WELLESLEY COLLEGE, FARNSWORTH MUSEUM. EXHIBITION OF INDIAN BASKETS

## EXHIBITIONS JUNE 1937 - JUNE 1942

- 1937 Students' work: 1936-37.  
 Drawings of Guatemalan Indians and native weaving. Drawings by Eben F. Comins.  
 Watercolors from Index of American Design. Lent by Federal Art Project, W.P.A.  
 Sculpture by Arnold Geissbuhler.
- 1938 Watercolors and Drawings by Howard Giles.  
 Watercolors by Agnes A. Abbot.  
 Etchings by Fabio Mauroner. Lent by the Print Corner, Hingham Center, Mass.  
 Fifth Annual Exhibition of the Wellesley Society of Artists.  
 Sculpture by Chana Orloff.  
 Watercolors by Eliot O'Hara.  
 Students' Work: 1937-38.  
 Prehistoric Rock Pictures. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.  
 Paintings by Gertrude Tonsberg.  
 Drawings of the Indians of the Americas by Eben F. Comins.
- 1939 Photographs by George E. Kidder Smith. Circulated by Carl Zeiss, N. Y.  
 Contemporary Mexican Art. Exhibition held in connection with the Hispanic American Forum.  
 Prints and Drawings by Samuel M. Green.  
 Sixth Annual Exhibition of the Wellesley Society of Artists.  
 Watercolors by John Whorf.  
 Sculpture in Wood by Genevieve Karr Hamlin.  
 Students' Work: 1938-39.  
 Drawings of American Indians by Eben F. Comins.  
 Paintings, Designs and Embroideries by Mrs. Anna J. Lesznai.
- 1940 Paintings by Lyonel Feininger.  
 Sculpture by Arnold Geissbuhler.  
 Seventh Annual Exhibition of the Wellesley Society of Artists.  
 Photographs by Mary Louise Barrett.  
 Watercolors by Agnes A. Abbot.  
 Memorial Exhibitions of Paintings in Oil and Watercolor by Mary G. Riley, '04.  
 Students' Work: 1939-40.  
 Paintings by Edwin W. Dickinson.  
 Drawings submitted for the Competition for an Art Center at Wheaton College.  
 Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.  
 Watercolors by Millard Sheets.  
 Watercolors by M. Jean-Marie Guislain.
- 1941 Paintings by Alison Mason Kingsbury, '20.  
 Technical Exhibition. Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.  
 Twenty Twentieth Century Paintings. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.  
 Eighth Annual Exhibition of the Wellesley Society of Artists.  
 Fifty American Etchings assembled by the National Committee of Engraving.  
 The Work of Alvar Aalto and Modern Houses in America. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.  
 Students' Work: 1940-41.  
 The Work of Paul Klee. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.  
 Art and Craft of Basket Making, Exhibition of Indian Baskets.  
 Twentieth Century Paintings. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.
- 1942 The Comins Collection of Drawings and Paintings. Lent by Eben F. Comins.  
 Watercolors by Agnes A. Abbot.  
 Twelve small French Paintings. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.  
 Ninth Annual Exhibition of the Wellesley Society of Artists.  
 Watercolors by Paul Sample.  
 Drawings by Arnold Geissbuhler and Tibor Gergely.  
 Students' Work: 1941-42.



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The lack of any endowment for the maintenance of the building and museum collections, and of any college fund for the purchase of works of art, makes our museum dependent upon the benevolence of its friends. We, therefore, invite anyone interested in the Wellesley College Art Museum to contribute to its welfare by joining one of the groups of its supporting members.

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## PUBLICATIONS

The Museum Bulletin is published at irregular intervals and is sent to all members.

Photographs and post cards of museum objects are on sale at the Museum Office.

## HOURS OF OPENING

Academic year: Week days, 8.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.;  
Sundays, 2.30 to 5 p.m.

Summer hours: 2 to 4.30 p.m., daily, except Saturday and Sunday.

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